THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, a formal trade agreement was signed on 22nd August, 1994 at Johannesburg between India and South Africa, the salient features of which are as follows:—

(i) Grant of Most Favoured Nation status in all matters of import and export licences, customs duties and all other charges & taxes applicable to importation, exportation and transit of goods.

(ii) Grant of all advantages, favours, privileges or immunities which any contracting party has granted to any other third party.

(c) it is expected that the Agreement would have a positive impact on trade between the two countries in the ensuing years.

Import of Natural Rubber

852. SHRI SUNDER SINGH BHANDARI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) how much natural rubber is bein imported for the last three years and at what price;

(b) what is the demand and local supply of natural rubber during the period;

(c) what has been the import duty on natural rubber; and

(d) whether any facility is given under the export incentive scheme for natural rubber, if so, what has been the import on this account?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM (a) Natural rubbei imported during the last three years and its price are as under:—

Year	Import of rubber (against advance licencing tonnes)	Unit price of imported imported rubber (Rs./tonnes)
1991-92	14,500	19,603
1992-93	16,498	26,068
1993-94	21,384††	23,312
1994-95*	6,394	30,274

††Includes 4131 tonnes with licences issued by the Government.

* upto November 1994.

(b) Demand and supply of NR during the ptriod are as under:

Year	Production (tonnes)	Consumption (tonnes
1991-92	366,745	380,150
1992-93	393,490	414,105
1993-94	435,160	450,480
1994-95	472,000	483,000

(c) The import duty of natural rubber has been 25 per cent since 22-4-93.

(d) Yes Sir. Exporters of rubber goods are allowed to import NR against Advance Licencing Scheme. The quantity thus imposted is as follows:

Year	Qty.
1991-92 . .	14,500 tonnes
1992-93 . .	16,498 ..
1993-94 . .	17,253 ..
1994-95 . .	6,394 ..
(Upto Nov. '94 provisional)	

Import of consumer goods

853. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Gooverament propose to allow the import of selective consumer goods; and

(b) if so, what decision, if any, has been taken by Government in this regard, stating

(i) the conditionalities attached to tse consumer goods import;

(ii) its impact on the domestic price structure of the consumer goods; and

(iii) its likely effect on the domestic production particularly on the small scale sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Under the current Export and Import Policy, import of Consumer goods including consumer durables is not permitted except against a licence or in accordane with a Public Notice issued in this regard. The review of the Export and Import Policy is an on-going process and changes in it are made from time to time, as and when considered necessary.

Trade with East European countries

854. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are planning to expand trade wits East European Countries, if so, the details thereof;

(b) what are the distinct advantages Government envisage in expanding trade with East European Countries; and

(c) what is the total value of trade (both exports and imports) with the East European Countries, country-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM:

(a) The Government of India has a strategy to expand trade and economic relations with East European nations. The principal policy thrust to expand trade and economic relations with East European nations, which is being followed by the Ministry of Commerce and Govt. of India, is outlined below:—

(i) Signing of new bilateral framework agreements on trade and economic cooperation with the emergent countries of the former Soviet Union and East Europe and substitution of rupee payment trade by standard convertible currency trading agreements.

(ii) Evolution of a more liberal credit policy vis-a-vis CIS states (credits worth US $ 55 million have already been advanced to Central Asian Republics):

(iii) Liberalisation of the counter-trade regime with East European Countries;

(iv) Liberalisation, in consultation with RBI, of consignment exports and warehousing regulations;

(v) Identification and development of more viable transport and transit routes—commissioning of a multisectoral study transit routes to Central Asia via Iran: initiatives on development of the port of Nevorossisk for trade with Russia;